

# **Updating Newtown's Plan of Conservation and Development**

## **PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP**

**March 8, 2003**

### **WORKSHOP TOPIC #7**

#### **Transportation and Circulation: What are Newtown's Most Important Traffic Issues And What Ideas Do You Have For Solving Them?**

##### **Introduction**

A safe and efficient transportation system, consistent with the Town's desired community character, is an essential ingredient to maintaining a high quality of life in Newtown. Newtown's network of older local collector roads were not originally laid-out and constructed to accommodate today's traffic volumes and vehicle speeds. As Newtown and the surrounding areas continue to grow, Newtown's road network will experience increases in traffic volumes that are likely to create new points of congestion and additional safety issues.

The following summarizes the Issues, Goals and Strategies that have been discussed for this topic:

### **TRANSPORTATION**

#### **ISSUE #1: Functional Classification of Roadways**

1. There are numerous differences between ConnDOT' and the Town's functional classification of roadways within Newtown.
2. The functional classification of roadways by ConnDOT can affect transportation planning policies and programming and as well as eligibility for ConnDOT and Federal transportation improvement monies.

**Goal: Resolve differences in the Functional Classification of roads within Newtown.**

#### **Strategy:**

1. Work with the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO), the areas regional transportation planning entity, to develop the information necessary to make the case to ConnDOT

that the past 20 years of rapid development and resulting changes to roadway usage, justify a rethinking of the way in which ConnDOT classifies many of the roads within Newtown.

**ISSUE #2: Roadway Congestion and Safety**

1. Current areas of traffic congestion and safety issues in Newtown have been described in a series of transportation planning documents;
2. As Newtown and the surrounding areas continue to grow, Newtown's network of State and local roads will experience increases in traffic volumes that are likely to create new points of congestion and additional safety issues;
2. Newtown's network of older local collector roads were not originally laid-out to accommodate today's traffic volumes and vehicle speeds;
3. The Route 25 Expressway will not be constructed in the foreseeable future and should not be counted on to address Route 25 congestion and safety issues;
4. Traffic volume on I-84 will continue to grow, partly in response to overflows from the congested I-95 corridor in lower Fairfield County.

**Goal: Alleviate areas of congestion and address safety issue.**

**Strategies- Route 25:**

1. Continue to implement the recommendations for curb cut management, as previously adopted the Planning and Zoning Commission;
2. Advocate for intersection oriented safety improvements along the Route 25 corridor, one by one, as can be justified by traffic engineering studies;
3. Work with ConnDOT District IV engineering staff to develop practical solutions to safety problems identified in previous transportation planning studies, which can be implemented by the joint efforts of District IV and Town staff;

An example of this type of cooperative effort would be the improvement of the Botsford Hill Road Intersection with Route 25, to be accomplished by a slight widening of the Town road approach to Route 25 to enable ConnDOT to re-stripe the intersection to create a new turning lane;

4. Enlist HVCEO's support and advocate with ConnDOT for the implementation of the recommendations of the Hawleyville Transportation and Development Study.

**Strategies- Route 6:**

1. Consider the separate adoption, by the Planning and Zoning Commission, of the curb cut management recommendations included in the Hawleyville Transportation and Development Study;
2. Enlist HVCEO's support and advocate with ConnDOT for the implementation of the recommendations of the Hawleyville Transportation and Development Study;

3. Encourage the Borough Planning and Zoning Commission to consider the adoption of the HVCEO prepared curb cut management for Church Hill Road from the Flagpole to I-84;
4. When completed, consider for incorporation into the POCD, the recommendations of the current ConnDOT transportation study for the high accident area of Church Hill Road, between Commerce Drive and I-84;

**Strategies- Route 302:**

1. Work with ConnDOT District IV engineering staff to develop practical solutions to the safety problems identified above, which can be implemented by the joint efforts of District IV and Town staff.

Two examples of this type of cooperative effort would be the improvement of the Key Rock Road and Hattertown Road intersections with Route 302, accomplished by slight improvement of Town road approaches and ConnDOT improvement of intersection sight lines.

2. Pursue State Scenic Road status for the portion of Route 302 from Key Rock Road to the east end of Sugar Lane.

**Strategies- Route 34:**

1. Work with ConnDOT District IV engineering staff to develop practical solutions to the safety problems associated with the Pole Bridge Road intersection. It may be possible that Town personnel could assist in this effort;
2. Work with ConnDOT to determine if any other solutions, such as minor shoulder widening, exist to address traffic backups associated with slow moving trucks on the Route 34 upgrade from Monroe;
3. Town planning and engineering staff should closely follow proposals to improve the Route 34 crossing of the Housatonic River in Monroe, to understand the consequences to Newtown of proposed improvements;
4. Advocate with HVCEO and ConnDOT for the immediate implementation of the “Interim Improvement” of Route 34 access to I-84 at Exit 11;
5. Pursue State Scenic Road status for the portion of Route 34 from the Monroe town line to Pole to Toddy Hill Road to help preserve the character of this area.

**Strategy- The Flagpole:**

1. Examine the merits of the proposal raised by HVCEO to address safety and traffic flow issues at this intersection through the development of a modern roundabout that would feature the Flagpole as a community monument in the middle of a landscaped circle.

**Strategy- Glen Road (SR 816):**

1. Pursue State Scenic Road status for Glen Road.
2. When updated ConnDOT right of way maps become available, continue to investigate the possibility of developing a bike path from the Housatonic River to the Sandy Hook village center.

**Strategy- Queen Street at Glover Avenue:**

1. Analyze traffic volume/accident history, traffic volume projections and previous improvement proposals for this intersection and prepare design alternatives to address safety issues in a manner which recognizes the residential character of the neighborhood.

**Strategies- I-84:**

1. Continue the POCD endorsement of expanding I-84 to three through travel lanes in each direction;
2. Work with HVCEO and ConnDOT to prepare an “Incident Management Plan” that addresses State and local actions designed to respond to the closure of I-84 due to accidents, maintenance and construction activities that result in an influx of traffic on roads within Newtown.

**ISSUE #3: Traffic Calming**

1. Several of Newtown’s older collector roads and local streets also function as thru roads for commuters and traffic destined for commercial uses. Examples, among others, include Hanover Road, Currituck Road, Toddy Hill Road and Glover Avenue;
2. The combination of thru traffic and speeds inappropriate for the affected areas can create safety hazards and conditions which diminish the quality of life for affected neighborhoods.

**Goal:** *The volume and speed of traffic should be compatible with the characteristics of the neighborhood through which the road passes.*

**Strategies:**

1. Implement traffic calming measures that address safety issues associated with traffic speeds that are not compatible for the character of the area through which the road passes;
2. Consider removing the requirement that a Town road must be “unpaved” to be considered for Town scenic road status.

**ISSUE #4: Pedestrian Circulation**

1. The desire for improved pedestrian facilities has emerged as a planning issue for the Borough and Sandy Hook village areas;
2. The desire for improved walking and hiking trails is evidenced by the activities and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Open Space Task Force.

**Goal:** *Improve Opportunities for Pedestrian Activities*

**Strategies:**

1. As they become available, consider the recommendations of the current Borough/Queen Street Pedestrian Study for incorporation into the POCD;
2. Consider the creation of a pedestrian trail connection between Queen Street and the Fairfield Hills Campus;

3. Consider recent recommendations for the revitalization of the Sandy Hook village area for incorporation into the POCD;
4. Consider the endorsement of the proposed trail from the 5/6 school at Fairfield Hills to the Upper Paugussett State Forest;
5. Pursue the possibility of extending the Monroe rail to trails facility into Newtown;
6. Continue the efforts of the Planning and Zoning Commission to create linked open space throughout the Town to facilitate the creation of a system of inter-connected mixed-use trails;
7. Once the Town's new digital parcel base map has been completed, prepare a composite map of the location of all publicly accessible walking trails.

**ISSUE #5: Public Transportation**

1. Newtown is not currently served by fixed-route public transportation service for the general public;
2. The results of the Community Planning Survey indicate that there is a desire for public transportation service;
3. The Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HART), has the capacity to provide fixed-route public transit bus service for the general public in Newtown;
4. The issue of fixed-route public transit service in Newtown has already been studied and found to be technically feasible.

**Goal: *Initiate fixed-route bus service in Newtown on a trial basis.***

**Strategy:**

1. Work with HART, HVCEO and ConnDOT to establish fixed-route bus service on a trial basis to determine the viability of public transit as an alternative mode of transportation for Newtown residents and employees of Newtown businesses.

**ISSUE #6: Rail Service**

1. Newtown is fortunate to have an active rail line that is capable of providing freight service for area businesses with rail sidings and the utilization of bulk material rail terminals located in Hawleyville;
2. Freight service is an important asset to the economy of Newtown;
3. Rail passenger service is not a current mobility option for Newtown residents;
4. Rail passenger service to Newtown may become viable in the future.

**Goal: *Maximize Rail Mobility Opportunities***

**Strategies:**

1. Become actively involved in future rail freight planning activities to ensure that Newtown's economy is satisfactorily served and that resulting activities are compatible with affected neighborhoods and roads;
2. Preserve the capacity along Newtown's existing rail line to implement future rail passenger service.

**ISSUE #7: Development Reviews**

1. Development proposals presented to the Town for municipal permits often contain elements that affect Newtown's transportation system;
2. Newtown is fortunate to have skilled engineering, public safety and public works personnel to review development proposals that may affect Newtown's transportation system.

**Goal:** *Develop a coordinated review process that will ensure that approved development projects contribute to Newtown's transportation system.*

**Strategy:**

1. Require each subdivision and site plan application to be reviewed by and signed-off by the Police Chief, the Town Engineer and the Public Works Director, as relates to transportation issues.